1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

888 521 He or she takes little warming to the task. They were hard times, even "bad times" of famine and death, but the speakers throw a glow of courage and glamour round them. Even the mention of the lack of tools, draft animals, shoes, and many other amenities of present existence evokes comments such as "Weren't they the poor old times?" and "Wasn't it hard the work they had to do in the old days?" Phrases of murmured commiseration and headshaking regret or pity are not without a tinge of pride for listener and teller alike. Remembered necessities in the eyes of the old people who tell the tale are now feats of endurance and strength to which the new generation could never aspire. That is the point for those who tell and those who listen. Where could you get a young man today to walk from Corrofin to Ballinasloe in his bare feet forty miles and back over the stony roads? Where is the woman today who could shoulder a creel turf and carry it a hundred yards out through the bog mud to the famine road before the Board put in the road to the bog above Dunnagore?

[482]

888 521 262 Even the meager diet of the old times is remembered with a certain nostalgic pride. An old man, called upon one winter evening, began his remarks upon the theme characteristically:

> In the old days people used to have a maize gruel "stirabout" for breakfast, but you couldn't get any of the young people to eat it now. There was a potato bread, *stampai*, and it was very good too. The people in the old times had great teeth and, when they died, they would have every one left in their heads. Their teeth would be stronger than a horse's. When the people ate potatoes and bread three times a day, they were healthier and lived to a ripe old age. Now with all the better food, they are not as well.

888 521 Such a belief rises very frequently to the lips of the old people who remember the days of the past either in their own or their parents' experience. The implication is clear. The young people, the new generation, are not so strong

6: Ó Súilleabháin B-4, 5 (no date) 1956 ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Two Death Customs in Ireland

SEÁN Ó SÚILLEABHÁIN

DUBLIN

121 In this article, I wish to draw the attention of students of the cult of the dead to two customs associated with it which have been observed for many generations in the southwest of Ireland. So far as I know, neither of them has hitherto been described in detail in any scientific journal or other work.

1. Funeral Boundaries

764 The importance of *an teampoll dúchais*, the traditional family burial-ground, is shown by the many customs and superstitions relating to it which are still fairly common in rural communities in Ireland. How often have we heard or read of a strange funeral seen at night, which was composed of deceased relatives of some recently dead person who had died and had been buried far from his family graveyard; the dead concourse was taking the body home (often even across the Atlantic) to find rest with his deceased kith and kin? Or, of a decapitated or maimed corpse which had been buried in the proper graveyard; the missing head or other member, however, was carefully carried by a "dead funeral" at night and laid in the same grave as the body? Thus, every effort within reason was made to bury the dead in the family burial-ground. This might have been due either to (a) respect for the dead, (b) fear of evil results, if the duty was ignored, (c) the wish of the dying person to be buried with his ancestors, or (d) any of a long list of other reasons which might be adduced. Even within a far-flung parish, the distance which the corpse had to be carried might amount to twenty miles. The distance would naturally be greater when the person had died in a remote district or county. Thus, funerals often took days in such cases, and halts had to be made overnight. The hardship endured by the coffin-bearers, who in olden times [482] almost always carried the coffin on their shoulders, may well be imagined.

In Ireland, as in most European countries, in the days when coffins were borne on men's shoulders, and even still in certain parts of Ireland, certain resting-places for funerals were traditionally appointed along the route. These were often at crossroads, at ancient market-crosses, which may have been associated with boundaries, or at boundaries between lands, parishes, or counties. In olden times, the corpse was not allowed to touch the earth at these resting-places; the toes of the

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Where is the woman today who
could shoulder a creel of turf a hundred yards out through the bog mud to the famine road, before the Board put in the road to the bog above Dunnagore?

Often the expressions take a different turn. They become that universal complaint — the younger generation. "Young people aren't what they used to be," said one old farmer in the course of a general discussion of the golden age that was his youth. "They spend money for fags, they have to be gambling every night, or else to a dance, and if they happen to win a turkey they will nearly shake the house down [in their triumph]. There is no good in the country when things go on like this. In the old days a man used always be out repairing his stone walls, cleaning his land, or doing something. Now you can't get them to do anything unless you pay them."

Here he paused for an illustration, chose one from among his own cronies, and swept volubly on. "Wasn't old Keane out every night with his cattle and he putting them in small fields and late in the night? Wasn't he up early in the morning and out working? They cleared a nice piece of land in the common. He kept at it till he had cattle all the way up by Ballyvaughan. You wouldn't get any of the young people to do that now. There's no controlling them."

Discussions of the present fall into the same vein. The past, for the older members of the community,

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

342 can be shown or assumed to be additions. A wicker windbreak of birch or hazel (called the wassock or corrag in Co. Antrim), was occasionally erected at one side of the door. Here, too, there was often a stone bench or "stile." The chimney generally betrays its modernity by being built of brick, but wooden or wattled chimneys, neatly thatched and bound with sugán, are not uncommon, and there are a few chimneyless dwellings still inhabited in the west. Old houses frequently have no more than a few inches of chimney projecting, and it is recorded that when efficient chimneys were built by improving landlords they were promptly covered with a sod, "because the smoke keeps them warm." It remains to be said that in former days house-building, like so many tasks demanding much labour, was a communal affair. "The custom on such occasions"—the scene is Donegal a century ago—"is for the person who has the work to be done to hire a fiddler, upon [476] which all the neighbours joyously assemble and carry, in an incredibly short time, the stones and timber upon their backs [482] to the site, men, women and children alternately dancing [535] and working while daylight lasts, when they adjourn to some dwelling where they finish the night, often prolonging the dance to dawn of day."

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

square, crane and "Sligo." The steel edge of its narrow blade is notched on the underside, the notches radiating so that they all cut at an angle of about 70 degrees. 243 412

It is much more difficult to use than the smooth hook; the straw must be held firmly in one hand and sawn through with a pulling motion. Some writers have indulged in idealized pictures of hand reaping which bear little relation to the cruel toil and "terrible strain" more faithfully and unforgettably portrayed by Richard Jefferies in his "Field and Hedgerow." There was no respite for reapers or binders: "Down with the head and up with the tail" was the descriptive phrase which I was given in the Glens of Antrim. In some parts, however, the reaper knelt down on one knee. Women and children generally did the binding. The corn was cut before it was fully ripe, "between green and gold," and as an illustration of the interdependence of the old ways it is worth noting that such straw was much more suitable for good thatching than the dry straw from the reaper. The old-fashioned scythe (see Frontispiece), not yet entirely displaced by the new style, was straight-handled. A short bladed tool, known in Co. Antrim as the "bramble scythe," is used for cutting coarse vegetation or mowing hay around bushes.

Corn stooks vary greatly in the number of sheaves they contain and in the methods of construction. They are often tied at the top with a straw band, and cap-sheaves are frequently seen. In wet districts the sheaves are later built into small round stacks, "barts" or "huts," until the time comes to carry them home. On small farms this is still done on the back, using a burden rope (Chapter 14), but the rick-lifter is also employed. Or the sheaves are piled high on ponies so that they resemble walking stacks. At harvest time two-ply twists of straw are worn in the button-hole (Fig. 114): they are part of the ceremonial of harvest time. The custom is general in north-eastern Ireland but I am not aware of it from other parts: it may be a feature of the Plantation. More widespread and fundamental are the practices, now mere

243 [482]

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

CHAPTER XII.

CARTS AND ROADS.

499 It has been claimed that the humble vehicles of certain regions of survival such as the Glens of Antrim represent an evolutionary sequence, the assumption being that the sledge or "slipe" was developed locally into the slide-car and the latter into the solid-wheeled car until the stage of the spoke-wheeled Scotch cart was reached. This argument ignores the wide distribution of similar means of transport in countries overseas, and the extent to which simple ideas are diffused from a common centre. It would be strange indeed if that centre were to be located on the extreme periphery of Europe when parallel forms of transport are found as far away as China. Nevertheless the Irish vehicles are of great ethnological interest, and they have survived because they are adapted to the soft turf bogs or the steep mountain sides. In more recent times the two-wheeled cart has blossomed into several specialized means of transport such as the side-car, the long-car, and the hay-cart or rick-lifter (Chapter II). The latter is also found in Lowland Scotland and may possibly have originated there.

482 But something must first be said about the still humbler transport agents such as the burden-rope, the back-creel and side-creel, the use of which has greatly declined, however, during the last half century. The two former show to what extent men and women, but especially women, act as beasts of

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

burden in Ireland as among other peasantries. The burden-rope, constructed of rushes, horse-hair or grass-rope (Chap. 14 and Figs. 79 & 80), was employed for carrying surprisingly large loads of hay, corn or bushes—" as much as a pony could draw," I have been told—while the burden-creel, slung over one shoulder or worn like a rucksack by women who would thus have their hands free for knitting, was mainly used for carrying turf. Nor should we omit the wheel-barrow, both box and turf types (Chapter 15 and Fig. 90), the hand barrow (for loads of stones and also for fish and nets) and the two-man turf creel (Fig. 91).

Side-creels are the panniers attached to an ass or small pony. Most of them are constructed with a hinged bottom so that the contents of turf, wrack, gravel or manure are automatically unloaded (Fig. 58). The sides are broken by ornamental " windows " which give a handhold for lifting and help to lighten the creel. Comparative study would reveal several regional and specialized forms of creel, and I have observed different methods of attachment even in neighbouring valleys. They are generally slung on wooden pegs driven into a roof-shaped crutch or straddle (Fig. 56) which rests on two straw mats. In the example figured from Tuam (Fig. 57) the straw mats are pegged together, and the straddle is strengthened by two osier ties, to one of which the tail-sugán is fastened. When hay or corn is being carried the creels may be dispensed with and the " bottles " or sheaves hung on the straddle pegs with an osier ring. Alternatively the creels are tied together with ropes which pass over a thick straw pad laid along the animal's spine, and the straddle is not used. The creels are D-shaped and can be made of openwork, for turf or wrack, or of closely-woven sides for manure. We shall have something more to say about their construction in Chapter 14.

Fig. 56.

Among horse-drawn vehicles the sledge or slipe is very generally employed for transporting stones, manure, or turf and also for conveying the plough and harrows from one field to another. I illustrate the common slipe of Co. Antrim

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Lough Neagh—incidentally one of the oldest occupied areas in the country—the valley of the Suir and the Aran Islands. I illustrate a boat-shaped yarn-holder (Fig. 73) and also two types of " calf basket " (Fig. 74), which are tied over the calf's muzzle to prevent it from taking the cow's milk. (In north Antrim, as in Wales, I have seen instead a leather strap armed with nails which is fastened on in such a way that the nails prick the cow's udder). The calf basket recalls the Roman *corbis constricta* which prevented the plough oxen from cropping the vine shoots. In fine work the basket maker uses split rods which he prepares with a " cleaver." The example illustrated (Fig. 75) is made of cow's horn.

Fig. 74.

Fig. 75.

Then there are the shallow fish baskets, resembling the potato-dish shown in Fig. 31, which the Galway fisherwomen carry on their heads. In Limerick oval trays or " floats " are used for hawking shell-fish or fruit: they are of various sizes from 1 to 2 feet in length. Potato baskets (Fig. 54) and shallow baskets used in connection with wool-dyeing must be mentioned, and I illustrate two kinds of linebasket (Fig. 76) which, like the lobster pots (Fig. 104) are made by the fishermen. The tall apple-baskets used for picking fruit in the Armagh orchards taper down to a narrow base. On the other hand the deep carrying-baskets of the Aran Islands are shaped

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[482]
[184]
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9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

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Line Baskets

Fig. 76. Length *c.* 3 ft.

into a narrow mouth, a feature which is found in all Aran basket-work. Miss Gahan of the Irish Homespun Society regards it as an adaptation to the conditions on the islands, for the contents might easily be spilled owing to the number of loose stone walls which have to be crossed on a journey to the fields. Many of the Aran carrying baskets (" kishauns ") are constructed of coiled straw rope bound together with split bramble (Fig. 77). They no doubt help to keep warm the food carried in them, such as boiled potatoes, boiled in their skins needless to say, in the Irish fashion. Such " lipe-work " was once common in Wales, where seed-baskets, yarn-holders, hassocks and meal containers were made in this way, but in Ireland the only coiled work I have seen outside the Aran Islands is the bee-skep of rye straw, tied with bramble. The illustration shows the small bone pin or awl used by the islanders in threading the brambles. Similar pins, which doubtless had many uses, are frequently found in archæological excavations, particularly on sites where a Mesolithic heritage may be suspected.

[282]
[231]

Fig. 77.
Note bone pin.

This brings us to the very large topic of the uses made of straw. There is no need to refer to the value of oat straw as fodder or as thatch, though it does not last long as roofing material, and either wheat or rye straw is preferred. A humble example of the use of thatch is shown in the beehive (Fig. 77*a*) Rope (sugán) made of straw or hay still finds many uses, especially for tying down thatch on houses and stacks. It is twisted on a " thraw-hook " of ash or hazel, with a sally hand-grip, but the old styles are declining with the spread of a simple " twister " of strong bent wire (Fig. 78). This type is found throughout the British Isles in many forms some of which are

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[231]
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Fig. 77*a*.
Height 4 ft.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

3/4 the fuel is built differ from one area to another, and I give as a sample the list prepared by Mr. J. M. Mogey for Co. Antrim. After about a fortnight the spread turf is stacked in small " foots " formed by leaning a number of turves together, and later in " turn-foots " and " castles " which are built up in storeys. These are then combined into larger " rickles " or

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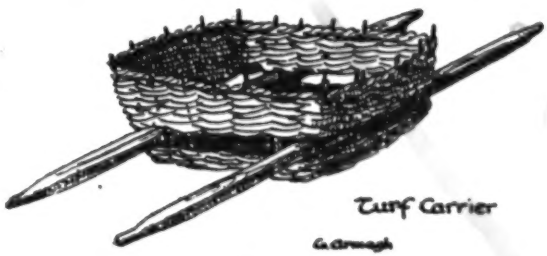


Fig. 91.

" clamps " and finally stored in " hand-stacks " erected alongside a bog road or in larger stacks built at the homestead (Fig. 93).

[413]

Fig. 92.

In many parts of the country the low-lying bogs are too wet to cut with the spade, and other methods of " winning " the turf must be adopted. Making " hand-turf " by moulding or " kneading " the black mud into balls is the simplest solution of the problem, but systematic methods have been evolved in some districts, and we give an account of the process as observed in Co. Meath, where mud turf is highly prized and considered to burn better and last longer than cut peat. It is dug in pits, broken down with short-handled shovels and graips and well mixed with water until the slushy mixture is ready to shovel into a box barrow, that is an ordinary manure barrow or a turf barrow fitted with sides, It is wheeled on to a smooth place and spread in a layer some 9 inches thick. When dry enough to take a man's weight the layer is notched in deep parallel grooves made with the edges of the hands, with cross grooves at intervals. The worker

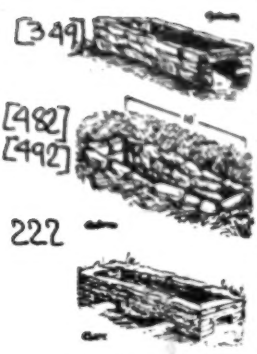
9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Fig. 100.
Total length 50"

as of other branches of the sciences of humanity that we know more of the ways of remote peoples of the world that we do of our own folk (Figs. 97 and 98, and Plate VI).

Before leaving the sea and coming back to shore, brief reference must be made to some other sea-creatures which have contributed to the economy of the coasts. There is the basking shark of the Aran Islands pursued in curraghs and captured with a harpoon of the type shown in Figure 100. Seals, despite the many superstitions attaching to them, have been hunted for their skins; according to an old account the skins were made into covers for the oval curraghs of the Rosses in Donegal. It is recorded that seal-catchers in Co. Cork wore on their arms "bags quilted with charcoal." The seals when they bite are said to let go the hold when they hear the crunch of the charcoal.

Shore-collecting plays a varied if nowadays greatly reduced part in the life of coastal communities. The great days of kelp-burning, when the strong dense smoke drifted far inland, are no more, but this once flourishing industry has left its traces in half-ruined kelp-kilns (Fig. 101) and in various rusting hooks and drags (102, 103) which betray the keen rivalry shown in gathering the crop. The best weeds (tangle or "fyams," that is, *Laminaria*) were cut in deep water and their value was enhanced if they were free of sand. The men would sometimes have their knives and sickles fitted with handles as much as twenty feet long: women and children with back creels, assisted by donkeys or ponies with side-creels, did the carrying. In Aran the creel women protect their backs from the damp seaweed by wearing a goatskin.



Kelp Kilns
Fig. 101.

Carting or "drawing" the wrack for manuring the fields is still an active industry in spring on most Irish shores. The wrack is often carried some miles inland, and there are many stories of the contraband goods once smuggled from the coast under cover of loads of piled wrack. In Carlingford Lough, where the tides run high, wide stretches of foreshore are "planted" with rows of boulders in orderly fields called "plans." The bladderwrack which grows on the stones is

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

585 "straw-boys" go round with long straw masks on, and if they do not get either money or liquor will threaten to break the windows and furniture of the house. The women marry very young, from fifteen
582 years upwards; and, if not settled in life by twenty or so, they usually emigrate.

844 Infants are given butter immediately after birth, and are carefully watched, lest they should be "taken away" or changed. For some similar reason a parturient woman has a string tied round the wrist or one of the fingers. All the wood in a house is carefully put outside if
763 the death of one of the inmates is thought to be imminent; and if it should occur the neighbours dread to give wood to make the coffin, as they believe that the person who does so will be the next to die; and if the plank of which the coffin is to be made is not taken down from the loft where it generally is, before the person dies, no inducement can make them use it for the purpose. The people never bury their
764 dead on a Monday, nor on the day of the week in which the Feasts of the Holy Innocents has fallen for that year. They have a great
[762] horror of suicides, and believe that if one were to be buried in the graveyard it would cause the other corpses to turn over on their faces.

A wake is held the night before the funeral, on those who have died abroad or been lost at sea, when the news arrives; but owing to
[178] the influence brought to bear on the people by the clergy in this matter, it is now only attended by relatives of the deceased, and the character of the ceremony is much altered, most of the old games, the mock marriage, &c., being altogether obsolete, while the insobriety, formerly common, is now a thing of the past. At the funeral the coffin
[482] is carried out the back door, and is followed by the mourners. On reaching the graveyard it is carried thrice round the old church in the direction of the sun, and as soon as the grave is reached all those attending the funeral scatter and go to pray at the graves of their own relatives, which, having done, they raise the keen, beginning at the person farthest from the open grave.

The Rev. E. O'Growney, who has generously placed at my disposal a number of notes taken during a visit to these islands, thus describes a funeral he witnessed in Inishbofin:—"The old Irish funeral *caoine* is still used in its full perfection. I happened to be engaged in the church of St. Colman, deciphering a peculiar Latin inscription there, when a large number of people, chiefly women, brought the body of an infant for interment. While the body was being interred the women
764 scattered about the churchyard, each going to the grave of her own
533 friends. Those farthest from the newly-made grave began a low

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

352 stools, and a rough table or two, with a dresser containing a scanty assortment of coarse earthenware, a spinning-wheel, and a quilting-frame, constitute the furniture of the kitchen. In one corner is a pile of turf for fuel, on which the fowl roost, and above the couples are stored the dried fish, &c., for the winter's use, and the agricultural and piscatorial implements.

415 The domestic utensils consist of the usual large three-legged pot, slung on a crook over the fire, a griddle, a frying-pan, and, perhaps,
352 a quern, a boran or sieve of sheepskin stretched over a wicker frame, and a couple of skids or shallow, circular wicker baskets. The furniture of the bedroom, or rooms, consists of a couple of tent beds; a few chairs and, perhaps, a small table. There is very rarely a loft
231 to the house. At night the cattle, fowl, and pigs are taken into the kitchen, the pigs being accommodated in a pen beside the fire-place, while the cattle are fastened at the opposite side of the room.

[491] 6. *Transport.*—The roads are good, and extend over a large part of the islands, but are only used for foot traffic and cattle, as there are
492 no wheeled vehicles of any description, and all goods are carried
● [482] either in hampers slung on the back, the usual method of taking home potatoes, &c., or in two wicker panniers or cleaves, slung across the back of a pony or donkey, one or other of which is owned by nearly every family. The harness of these animals is home-made, and of primitive design, the panniers, manufactured from osiers grown on the islands, being slung from pegs on a wooden frame, beneath which, to protect the animal's back, is a thick straw mat saddle. Both sexes ride on the horses behind the panniers, and both adopt the same position, a sideways posture, the men not riding astride.

[243] The method of taking home the harvest is picturesque; the ponies have cloths hung over their faces to prevent their eating the grain, and are then literally clothed with sheaves, which are hung all round them, and piled up so as to give them the appearance of walking straw stacks.

501 For water transport there are a good many boats of various descriptions, the primary use of which is for fishing; only one, the
[505] post-boat, which goes thrice a week to the mainland if the weather permits, being regularly used for transport.

The number and classification of the boats are, it is believed, given correctly below, but it was difficult to get any two accounts to agree.

There are five hookers, seven pookauns,[1] fifteen curraghs, one yawl, and about thirty rowing-boats.

[1] An undecked sailing-boat, cutter rigged.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

time large-scale hay-making developed it had to fit into a fixed rota of farm work which kept men busy in late July and August at flax-pulling and turf-carrying, so that the cocked hay had to wait. Today the baling machine is speeding up the process, but the bales, whether from the need of seasoning or from force of habit, are left piled in angular cocks scattered over the hayfield.

Carried at last to the haggard on rick-shifters or slipes—formerly on slide-cars or the backs of men and ponies—the hay is built into small circular stacks (pikes). As a protection against wind and rain they are thatched with rushes forthwith and roped (Fig. 52). Since the stacks are thatched before they have had time to settle, the pegged or scolloped thatch found in England is not used. Not only do ropes hold the thatch more securely but it is a simple matter to tighten them as the stack sinks. In the simplest form of roping, hanging stones are attached to the rope ends so that the adjustment is automatic. But where the roof of the stack is not rounded but conical a straw-rope is wrapped round in a spiral which can later be tightened by vertical ropes pegged into the lower part of the stack. One sees this spiral roping also in parts of western Britain. Several other patterns of roping are found, some making a complete network; and the shape of the stack also shows many regional variations (Fig. 52). The size and shape depend not only on local custom but to some extent on the weather and the condition of the hay. Small rounded stacks are most usual, for they are wind-resistant. They are characteristic too of much of Highland Britain from Caithness to Cornwall.

The scythe has not entirely given way to the mowing machine on small farms in whose tiny fields it would anyhow be difficult to turn a machine. The Irish scythesmen, though not so well known as the spalpeens or reapers, had their brief day in the English harvest-fields, and those who remember working 'across the water' in the nineteenth century tell of great feats of piecework. I was told of one heroic figure who could scythe seven acres in the day, 'and four lifters wouldn't lift after him'. Henry Stephens, in 1855, reckoned that the English labourer would scythe four acres of oats or barley in a ten-hour working day.[1]

[1]Quoted in E. C. Curwen, *Plough and Pasture* (1946), 98.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

covered from early Celtic sites in Ireland suggest that the horse was held in high regard and was perhaps reserved for pageants, combats and ceremonies. The detailed evidence in the legendary histories of ancient Ireland for the existence of roads, however, is clear. The fact that the Celtic roads are rarely traceable today is understandable in view of the physical conditions of the country, especially the prevalence of obliterating bogs. Moreover the road system must have decayed with the decline of Celtic culture. In any case it is evident that the use of the chariot was confined to the highest castes, and that its humble relation the block-wheeled car was fated to outlast it. The finely-spoked wheeled vehicles of the Celtic invaders were as much out of place in Ireland as the great wagons which later overlords introduced from England. The block-wheeled car, if not previously known in Ireland, may have been the native response to the impressive magic of the Celtic wheel, or it may have reached this country with Celtic camp-followers. We shall see that it could have been developed from the slide-car which almost certainly preceded it in Europe. The term 'wheel-car' as used in Ireland refers to the block-wheeled car and is clearly meant to distinguish it from the wheel-less slide-car. The spoke-wheeled cart is a newcomer in most parts. Nevertheless there is evidence that a light spoke wheeled cart continued to be used in early Christian times: an example drawn chariot-wise by two horses is figured on the eighth century Ahenny Cross in Co. Tipperary. It seems that such light carts were used for personal transport, for example St. Sampson took one with him, according to an eleventh-century account of his travels, to carry his books across Cornwall on his way from Ireland to Brittany.[1] And the spoke-wheeled cart must have been known in the planted areas since the Middle Ages, so that it is very probable that in parts of the country the cart has had a continuous life since early Celtic times.

But we should first examine certain archaic methods of transport which depend on the carrying power of beasts and men, or rather women, for in simple societies the bearers of children are also the burden-bearers. The romance of rural

[1] O. G. S. Crawford, 'Western Seaways' in *Custom is King* (1936), 196.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

492 tied bundles on to the straddle-pins, and both sheaves and firewood are occasionally carried on light V-shaped wooden
482 frames. A similar carrying frame is known from Spain. There are several varieties of straddle, and a pattern found on Clare Island, in which one side engages in a hole bored through the other side, finds a parallel in the Shetland Islands and among [171] the Lapps of north Norway: it could be of Norwegian origin. For long hauls the pack animal was undoubtedly the chief means of transport until the coming of the spoke-wheeled cart. For short distances the burden rope (Chapter XV) or the carrying creel was more convenient and it is still not uncommon to see the back-creel, the carrying basket or the hand barrow used for transporting turf or wrack over rough, soft or slippery ground (Fig. 57).

493 In some parts of the country, especially along the east coast,
483 a form of sled fitted with a box body is kept for the transport

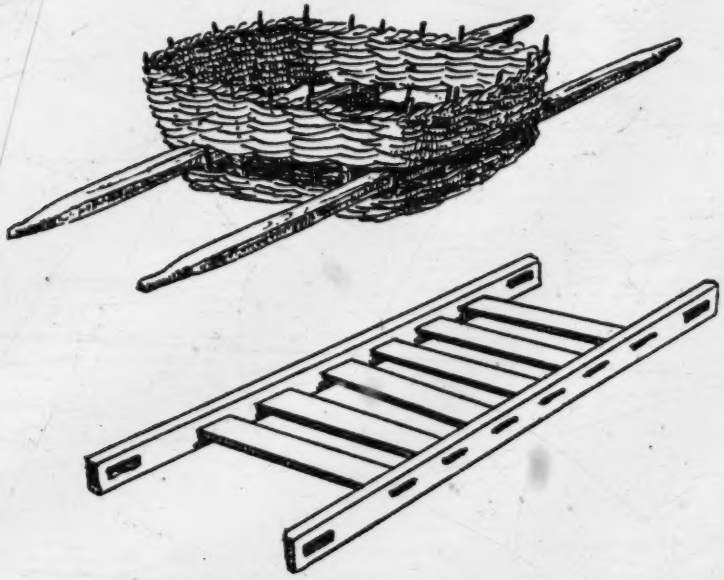


FIG. 57. Turf-basket, Co. Armagh and hand barrow, for carrying nets, Co. Antrim.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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283 of these rope-making materials had other uses as well, not forgetting their functions in ceremony and magic as represented by Briget's crosses, harvest knots, the blaeberry baskets of Lammas and the rush ladders of Hallowe'en. Better known, [373] though no longer made, are the rushlights whose feeble glow, in the words of Gilbert White, made 'darkness visible'.

[284] [285]

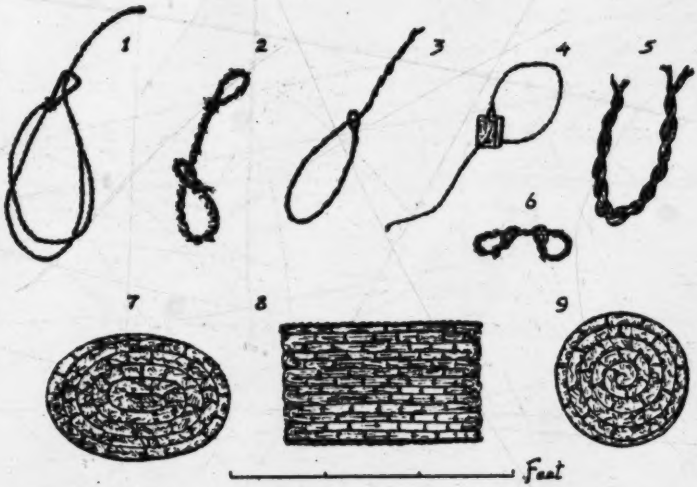

FIG. 68. Ropes and mats. (1) Rush burden rope, Co. Donegal. (2) Tie of cow-hair, Co. Kerry. (3) Willow bark burden rope, Co. Roscommon. (4) Grass burden rope, Aran Islands. (5) Tie of fir-rope, from roof, Co. Down. (6) Sheep's langle of oat straw, Co. Down. (7) Plaited mat of marram grass, Co. Wexford. (8) Coiled mat of rye straw, Aran Islands. (9) Coiled mat of oat straw, Co. Donegal.

283 Examples of ropes and mats of various kinds are shown in Fig. 68. The burden ropes, carefully made in two or three ply, ●482 enabled quite heavy loads to be carried from inaccessible places. A correspondent in Co. Cork has sent me the following account of one method of lifting the burden, in this case of furze (gorse, whin) which was harvested both for bedding and for fodder. 'Passing his rope round the bundle, the carrier would throw himself on his back on top of the bundle, kick his heels in the air and jerk himself to the vertical, walking away completely concealed beneath a moving mountain of furze.' Where tracks

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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were poor and there were no wheeled vehicles, or where there was no horse for a slide-car, the burden rope was all that was required to carry home the harvest; distances were mercifully small on the tiny farms. Rushes for rope making were cut when fully grown, beetled with a mell and broken by hand to rid them of pith. They were then spread to dry and afterwards tied in bundles ready to be fashioned into ropes when wintry weather brought indoor leisure. Ropes made of cowhair as well as horsehair, sometimes mixed with seasoned sedge (sprit) once found many uses about the farm. Horsehair fishing lines and snares for seabirds are described elsewhere, but we may refer here to snares for small birds which in south Armagh, for example, are laid on the grass in hard wintry weather over a scattering of grain or breadcrumbs. Inside the frame of a pegged string or a bent sally rod are tied a dozen or more snares made of single or double horsehair. By this means blackbirds, thrushes, sparrows, and finches are caught by the feet, nowadays for sport but, no doubt, once as a welcome addition to the food supply. Similar horsehair snares for catching small birds are known from England and, further afield, from the Sudan. Reins of horsehair are said to have been common quite recently in Donegal, and I would hazard a guess that horsehair nets, such as were made in Harris (Martin Martin tells us) for catching seals, were formerly made there.

Mats and baskets of many kinds were fashioned from straw and other materials such as marram grass. This tough grass is harvested in places all around the coast and put to many uses, including thatching. It is cut below the surface of the sandy dunes, and in Donegal I have seen a toothed sickle used for the purpose. The techniques of constructing mats and baskets of these materials are closely related and seem to fall into three classes, sown plaits, built-up plaits and coiled work. Coiled basketry is best represented in the once universal bee-skep, in the seed-baskets of the south, the seats and armchairs of the west, and in the food-carrying baskets of the Aran Islands (Fig. 69). It is an interesting detail of their construction that a bone pin is used to insert the ties, which are usually made of split briar. The conical hens' nests hung on pegs on the kitchen walls (Fig. 16) are also constructed in a coil technique, but

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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described as a gathering of the whole people, a time of feasting and festivals and courting. That there was magic as well as manure in the golden weed is apparent from the urge to possess some share, however small, of the harvest. In the kingdom of Mourne 'men would walk three miles to be present at the division of the wrack and were content to take back a single creelful on their backs. They would gather the bits of wrack on their knees, scraping them up with their hands as though it was gold dust.'[1] Here the division was by lot following a given signal—in one case a bush hoisted on a tall pole—for the farmers concerned to assemble. Wrack rights and ways of access are sometimes still bitterly fought over though they now have little meaning.

Spring was also the season for gathering other gifts of the sea, the shellfish and the shell sand which was carted inland and even taken on horseback for distances of up to thirty miles. Prized because 'it cut up the clay', it also provided much needed lime for acid soils. In South Donegal boatloads of mussels used to be scraped off the rocks with spades and distributed in creels for spreading on the potato ridges. In Dundalk Bay, Mr. H. G. Tempest tells me, mussels for the table and for bait are scraped up from boats with long-handled rakes (Fig. 74). Easter and Good Friday in particular were times for visiting the shore. Of the now deserted Blasket Islands Thomas O'Crohan writes: 'it has always been the custom here to go and get kitchen from the strand to eat on Good Friday.'[2] Winkles (willucks) were the favourite food on these occasions, but after St. Patrick's Day, they say, limpets are better eating than winkles. Shellfish were boiled in milk to give food for children and for calves. Sandeels were pulled up with a bent iron rod or a blunted sickle: in Mayo 'they are taken on moonlit nights by considerable gatherings of young people, the object being as much the amusement as the sandeels'.[3] In Donegal 'for scallops and oysters, when the tide was out, the young women waded into the sea, some of them naked, and by armfuls brought them to the shore.'[4]

[1]E. E. Evans, *Mourne Country*, 144.
[2]T. O'Crohan, *The Islandman*, 29.
[3]C. R. Browne, *Ballycroy*.
[4]A. B., *The Rosses in 1763*, 201.

[Text continues on p. 226]

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

tudes and practices; for the islanders do not wish to jeopardize unemployment assistance and old age benefits, nor to be taxed in the future, and thus closely guard sources and amounts of income, even from relatives and friends.

Division of Labor

The division of labor between the sexes is more dichotomous today than it was at the turn of the century, when there was an extensive sharing of the same tasks by men and women. The latter now restrict their economic activities to the home, for the most part, especially if they must care for infants and young children. As soon as children can speak and walk, they help their mothers perform household chores and run errands, such as carrying messages and procuring groceries in the shops. But at age seven, following First Communion, boys spend less time with their mothers and come to take on small jobs which throw them more and more into contact with their older brothers, their fathers, and other men of the island. By the time young adolescents pass Confirmation and leave school, at the time of puberty, they are able to perform most adult economic tasks, and their labor is of utmost importance to the family.

Among the major jobs performed by women outside of the household round, and these by only a few younger women, are cleaning fish, carrying seaweed, planting potatoes, haying, growing vegetables, feeding and milking cattle, and caring for poultry. They also knit, crochet, ready wool for weaving, and tailor clothes for themselves and their families, as well as make sweaters, belts, and shawls for sale. In the several homes which accommodate tourists during the summer months, most of the responsibilities for their care fall on the women of the household. Men also do the tasks associated with fishing, farming, and the care of large livestock just listed, and they participate in the job of thickening wool; all of the other subsistence and income activities are exclusively male ones.

In the past, when fishing was a more practiced and laborious occupation than it is now, women not only aided men gut and cure fish, but they baited lines and did other affiliated chores as well. They also participated to a greater degree than today in collecting seaweed and in planting, cultivating, and harvesting crops of all varieties. Their involvement in the economic life of the island often demanded that they transport heavy loads manually for long distances, especially when they cared for all of the needs of both large and small livestock and aided in kelp-making. It is not difficult to comprehend why women are mystified at the complaints of their single daughters about the hardships that young married women must endure.

Most folk admit that members of the present generation work less strenuously than did those of two generations ago, when harsh landlords rather than a benevolent government intruded so importantly into their lives. There is in Inis Beag a widespread feeling of guilt among men, seldom expressed openly, about being "lazy." It is my observation that island men, on the whole, put in fewer hours of labor and expend less energy than workers in a typical industrial plant in America. Inis Beag emigrants who return from England for visits invariably

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

as "sea rods" and are accumulated by several islanders, dried, and shipped by small boat in May or June to a factory on the mainland to be processed for their iodine content. One man received 90 pounds for his sea rods in the spring of 1960. Ribbon and black weed usually are cut at the time of planting and are carried immediately to the fields, while the other two types are pulled throughout the year and stacked along the coast or in outbuildings. The most effective seaweed fertilizer is black weed, because its "sap" permeates the soil most rapidly; but it and string weed are in short supply in Inis Beag and are most available to Terrace villagers.

Any landowner can collect seaweed on the strand and along the shore bordering the western part of the common land. So much red weed washed ashore on the easily accessible beach during December of 1959 that men from all four villages gathered it during the Christmas season, when work usually is at a standstill. Along the rest of the Inis Beag coast, areas for seaweed collecting are assigned to each village and to every family holding land within the community. Low Village gathers along the west sound, although a short strip of shoreline is assigned to High; Castle and High have collection rights along the eastern portion of the common land, and they also gather from the Atlantic coast near the ends of the roads leading from their respective communities; and, Terrace obtains its seaweed along the east sound, except for areas near the lighthouse assigned to Castle families. Long ago, a portion of the Quarter of the Castle was assigned to the Quarter of the Lake, but the traditional seaweed rights near the lighthouse were maintained.

On days suited for seaweed collecting, the coastline of Inis Beag is alive with moving forms during the several hours that the tide has ebbed. Men wade out on the bared reefs to cut or pull plants, which they pile in woven sally rod baskets, called "creels," and carry to horses and asses tethered on the paths above "high water mark." Sometimes a man will lead his ass to the edge of the water and load it directly, if footing is secure, and he may be aided in the task of carrying creels by his wife and children. The weed then is transported to the fields and dried on the fences or placed directly on the "gardens;" weed which has been stored from the previous year also is spread on the plots, sometimes several weeks before seeding takes place. There is a wide difference of opinion among farmers as to whether or not seaweed should be put down dry, and, if spread, how long it should be exposed to rain before "rotting" dispels the "juices." The same differences of opinion mark the evaluation of the efficacy of various fertilizers and their use at the several stages of "setting" a garden.

One of the tasks of the agricultural agent is to test soils and advise farmers as to which kinds of seaweed and other fertilizers are best suited for their land. But he seldom is consulted, and if his advice is sought, it is more often than not disregarded. Family and village traditions still guide farming procedures to a great extent, and experimentation is a rarity. Terrace Village farmers employ all four types of seaweed, in part because it is a village custom, but also because they have access to most of the string and black weed in the island. This practice is lauded by the agent as being scientifically the most effective; however, he takes no credit for the Terrace idiosyncracy. Among other important duties performed by

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(1959-1960) Inis Beag

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• [482]

Figure 5. Improving a garden with compost unloaded on seaweed

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654 the agent are providing seed potatoes and overseeing the construction of fences, fields, reservoirs, and outbuildings subsidized by the government.

241 The average sized farm of a fourth has approximately half of its acreage in quarter- and half-acre gardens; the other half is divided fairly evenly between larger plots containing indigenous soils used for grazing and those enclosing lime-
[654] stone pavement, or "crags." Gardens are smaller in size because subsidies for their
[435] manufacture are paid according to the quarter-acre—7 pounds and 10 shillings when a potato crop is grown—and a field this size can be converted into a garden comfortably in the period of a year. Most landholders plant from a half-acre to a full acre of potatoes yearly, and it is estimated that a quarter-acre will produce,
[433] under normal weather conditions, nearly four tons of "spuds." According to the agricultural agent, the use of human manure as a fertilizer accounts for such a
[437] high yield. The amount of potatoes consumed depends, of course, on the size of the householder's family, but many farmers export surpluses the following summer before new spuds are harvested.

"Improving" refers both to developing a new garden and to enriching an old one with compost (see Fig. 5). New plots usually are manufactured in areas containing indigenous soils, so as to lessen the labor required. If a garden is to be "laid" on pavement, a much fissured area is chosen so that adequate drainage is afforded. The plot is leveled by removing protruding stones with crowbar and sledge hammer (not by throwing a huge boulder from above the head, as shown in the aforementioned film), and fissures are filled with small rocks to the extent
[333] that soil components added later will not filter down. Large stones are placed in
[654] fences which surround the field, for which the government pays the farmer, or farmers, involved in their construction 2 pounds for each 22 yards raised 4 feet. Writers describing the local milieu seldom fail to mention that fences are numer-